



NOTICE OF MOTION

Date: March 28th, 2024
To: Mayor and Council
From: Councillor Kyle Sampson; Supported by Councillors Tim Bennett & Cori Ramsay
Subject: Community Safety Town Hall

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Community Safety Town Hall Recommendation:

- a. That Council hosts a Community Safety Town Hall meeting on May 1st to provide an opportunity for community members, business owners, and other stakeholders to share their concerns, ask questions, and share ideas with key City of Prince George staff and members of Council in addressing the encampments, and complex social issues throughout our community. In addition to City of PG staff, invitations for representatives from the Northern Health Authority and BC Housing to participate must be sent, and;
- b. That Council directs Administration to coordinate the Town Hall, with a budget of up to \$20,000.00 from the Council Contingency Fund for use towards venue, A/V, display materials, advertising/mailouts, a facilitator, and any other directly related expenses.

2. Council/Staff Follow Up Workshop and Action Recommendation:

- a. That Council commits to participating in and directs Administration to coordinate a facilitated follow up workshop with Council and City Administration for the purpose of strategizing and identifying clear action items based on the information and data provided and gathered through the Town Hall at its soonest opportunity, and;
- b. That Council directs Administration to bring back a subsequent report to a public Council meeting with actionable items towards addressing the community's concerns and the recommendations no later than the June 12th regular Council Meeting.

DISCUSSION:

Like many communities, Prince George is experiencing a wide array of complex social issues regarding mental health, addiction, homelessness, and encampments. The City has taken many significant steps to address these challenges, but despite increased resources from the City, as well as the increased advocacy for resources from the Provincial Government, the issues persist.

We have had some success in our advocacy with the Provincial Government in addressing housing and shelter needs, however, much more is needed. The Province's plan of Housing First provides housing to those who need it, but it doesn't provide the necessary resources for mental health, addictions, or other

health-based issues that are often the root cause for individuals experiencing homelessness; those issues are outside of a municipality's expertise and mandate.

It is well past time that we hear from our citizens who are impacted by this. I have been advocating for multiple years now that we need 'Made for PG solutions'. Solutions that come from hearing and understanding the needs of our community. We can advocate for the necessary resources, but we need our residents help to develop the plan, and stand with us in our efforts and advocacy.

The intent with the Community Safety Town Hall is to provide Council and Staff a coordinated opportunity to hear from residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. This platform will allow them to ask questions, share ideas, and relay concerns – to be heard. The proposed format would see the Town Hall divided into two halves, the first being a 3-4 hour open house style function with information boards and one-on-one engagement with staff and council; and the second half being a 2-4 hour facilitated panel where participants can interact with Council, Staff, and invited guest panelists to share their ideas and concerns. At the very least, our residents can be heard and interact with Council and Staff, but I also hope to encourage representatives from BC Housing and Northern Health Authority to attend and participate in both halves of the Town Hall.

The formal portion of the event is a facilitated panel which will include key City personnel (City Manager, Fire Chief, Manager of Bylaws, Director responsible for Community Partnerships and Strategic Initiatives, as well as RCMP OIC Superintendent), and Mayor and Council. The session could include (very) brief introductory remarks from each member of the panel, followed by a Q&A session with public participants.

It is imperative we take action now to hear from our residents, understand their concerns, and hear their ideas to address these complex issues. While much of this situation is outside of the control and mandate of local government, we still have an opportunity to listen, compile data, generate possible actions, provide leadership, and do what we can to address these issues for all our residents – those living without housing, and our residents and businesses who are invested in our community.

Our actions will not necessarily solve these problems, but at the very least we can still do our best to mitigate the impacts and address some of our citizens concerns. We cannot allow the safety, health, and overall wellbeing of the rest of our community continue to be disproportionately impacted.

Although everyone is invited and encouraged to attend and participate, it is my intent that invitations be mailed directly to the residents of the Millar Addition, the east of Queensway businesses, downtown businesses, the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation Chief and Council, the BC Assembly of First Nations Regional Chief, the local MLA's and MP's, Downtown Prince George, and the Prince George Chamber of Commerce. My intent is to all join together as a community in understanding, compassion, and proactive dialogue, leveraging our collective voice and ideas to create solutions that benefit our community's well-being as a whole.

It is intended that within the report to be delivered to Council by June 12th, that a follow-up 'check-in', or pulse check type consultation plan with the community will be detailed.

Respectfully Submitted,



Councillor Kyle Sampson



Councillor Tim Bennett



Councillor Cori Ramsay